



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
CAMPGROUNDS & POOLS UNIT
WATER BUREAU



CABINS AND PARK MODELS IN CAMPGROUNDS

This document is intended to clarify how the Campgrounds & Pools Unit (CPU), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), regulates recreational units that cannot be driven or towed such as camping cabins, resort cabins, and park models.

- Are cabins allowed in licensed campgrounds in Michigan? **YES**
- What types of cabins are allowed? **ALL TYPES**
- Are cabins allowed on a licensed campsite? **YES AND NO**
- Are park models allowed in licensed campgrounds in Michigan? **YES**

Camping Cabins

Rule 1 (1) (b) of the campground rules, defines a “camping cabin” as “a recreational unit that is a hard-sided tent or shelter,

- that is less than 400 square feet in area,
- that is on skids designed to facilitate relocation from time to time,
- and that does not have a direct connection to a source of water.”

A cabin that meets this definition may be placed on a licensed campsite. The number of campsites with camping cabins in any campground must be reported to the DEQ.

A camping cabin is allowed to have electrical outlets inside the structure. The campsite may have a water connection or water outlet outside, but not inside the camping cabin. Since water connections are not allowed inside a camping cabin, water using sanitary fixtures such as sinks, showers, or toilets are not allowed inside the cabin.

A camping cabin may be located on a modern site or on a primitive site. If users of the campsite depend on flush toilets in a service building, then it is “modern.” If users of the campsite depend on a privy, then it is “primitive.” This is not necessarily the camping industry definition of modern or primitive.

Since a camping cabin is a licensed campsite, local codes apply to the extent that they apply to the other licensed campsites. However, local codes may require building permits.

Resort Cabins

If a cabin does not meet any one of the parts of the definition of a camping cabin, then the CPU describes the cabin as a “resort cabin.” A resort cabin is:

- greater than 400 square feet in area, or
- is not on skids but is permanently attached to the ground, or
- has a water connection inside the cabin.

Resort cabins are allowed in campgrounds, but cannot be placed on a licensed campsite. If a resort cabin is placed on a licensed campsite, then that site would be removed from the campground license.

Since resort cabins often have water and sanitary fixtures inside, they have an impact on the campground water supply and wastewater disposal system. The campground water supply and wastewater disposal system must have capacity to handle the added load for each resort cabin.

If the cabin has the same fixtures as a typical RV, then the CPU will rate the water and sewer use for the resort cabin the same as a typical modern campsite. The number and location of resort cabins must be reported to the DEQ.

Since resort cabins are not campsites, then all local building and zoning codes apply and may be enforced by local officials. Resort cabins may require building permits under local codes.

Park Models

Another category of the nontraditional RV is the park model. The campground rules (Rule 1 (1) (d)) define a “park model recreational unit” as: “a recreational unit that is built on a single chassis mounted on wheels, that has a gross trailer area of not more than 400 square feet in the setup mode, and that is certified by the manufacturer as complying with the American National Standards Institute Standard A119.5.”

Because a park model is defined as a recreational unit, it may be placed on a licensed campsite.

Park models resemble a manufactured home, but are limited to 400 square feet in area. They are equipped with water using sanitary fixtures such as sinks, showers, and toilets. Because these fixtures more closely resemble the fixtures found in homes rather than those found in RVs, there are additional water and sewer demands for park models.

Rule 9 requires the water supply to be capable of supplying each park model at one gallon per minute. Rule 11 requires that the wastewater disposal system be capable of receiving 150 gallons per day for each park model.

Because park models are not equipped with wastewater holding tanks and typically have larger wastewater flows than other RVs, the CPU requires that a park model must be located on a site with a site sewer connection.

NOTE: The information in this document is intended to supplement the campground portions of the Public Health Code, 1978 PA 368, as amended, and the Campground Rules. These comments do not replace or supersede any portion of the Act and Rules. To download a copy of the Campground Act and Rules, please go to www.michigan.gov/deqwb.